

## Preface

The six articles included in this volume were presented at six different international conferences on distance education held between 1984 and 1988. The purpose and composition of these conferences are clear evidence of the surge of distance education worldwide.

"Adult Learning and the Consequences for the Selection of Media: the Japanese Approach" was presented at the Distance Higher Education and the Adult Learner conference held at Heerlen in the Netherlands from 22-24 October, 1984, in commemoration of the opening of the Dutch Open University. Participants came from OECD countries and the forum was continued the next year in the United States where visitation to key institutions utilizing new media in distance education was made. Inclination toward the extensive use of communication satellites, computer-communication, and networking of the learning environment set the tone of the group.

"Innovation in Japanese Higher Education: The Case of the University of the Air" is a paper read at the Korean-Japanese Dialogue on Higher Education organized by the Korean Council of University Education in June, 1985. Policies and practices to meet the massification of higher education in these two countries have been presented from either side. The extreme needs for and rapid massification of higher education mark the common trait of the two countries and the contribution of distance education as a solution to the problem was the focus of the flow of discussion in this dialogue.

"The Birth of the Japanese University of the Air" is a paper presented at the international seminar to commemorate the inauguration of the Indira Gandhi National Open University of India in December, 1985. Participants were invited by the Indian national authorities from the United Kingdom, Canada, Pakistan, Australia, Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, China, Japan and elsewhere. While the British Common Wealth nations emphasize printed materials and instruction by correspondence, special attention was paid to the extensive use of television and radio broadcasting in distance education in China and Japan. Although opinions varied as to the educational and cost effectiveness of the print and broadcast media in distance education, in view of the wide varieties of social and geographical background of distance education learners, there is a common need for studying the feasibility of the varieties of media.

"Distance Education in Japan" was written as a country report for the Asian Development Bank when it organized an international conference on distance education in Asia and the Pacific from 26 November to 3 December, 1986, at Bangkok. While keynote papers presented the concepts and methodological reflections of distance education, the 24 countries from Asia and the Pacific with

basically identical format, discussed the current situation of distance education in their own countries, scope for further expansion of distance education, participation by non-government institutions, governmental policies regarding distance education and the scope for involvement in international activities. The two volume publication produced after the conference by the Asian Development Bank provides a basic database on distance education in Asia and the Pacific.

"The Needs for Technology" was read, accompanied by a laserdisk presentation of current utilization of various electronic communications technology at higher education institutions as well as corporate classrooms in Japan, at an international conference organized by Ramkhamhen University in Bangkok in January, 1987. While the key distance higher education institution of Thailand is Sukhothai Tammathirat Open University, Ramkhamhen is an older open higher education institution that has served the rapid massification of higher learning on campus and has struggled with the growing mass on campus by introducing video and other technologies, with the cooperation of Canada. The themes developed at the conference, therefore, covered varieties of educational methodologies, including video, computer assisted instruction, computer managed instruction, etc.

"Communications Technology" was one of the keynote speeches at the 14th World Conference of the International Council on Distance Education, held in Oslo from 9-16 August, 1988. The conference, commemorating council's 50th anniversary, marked a leap from correspondence education to new media based distance education. Major contributions at the conference included extensive use of communication satellites, setting up of worldwide computer communication networks in higher education and research, and the establishment of permanent office of the council in Norway. This was an occasion that confirmed the validity of distance education based on the mass dissemination of higher learning and the communication among learners strengthened by the advanced communications technology available today.

The defining elements of distance education that will prevail over the difference of levels and the historical and geographical diversities are identified by D. Keegan, as:

- (1) the separation of teacher and learner which distinguishes it from face-to-face teaching;
- (2) the influence of an educational organization which distinguishes it from private study;
- (3) the use of technical media, mostly in print form, to unite teacher and learner and carry the educational content;
- (4) the provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from, or even initiate dialogue;
- (5) the possibility of occasional meeting for both didactic and socialization purposes; and
- (6) the participation in an industrialized form of education.

Ralph Smith, meanwhile, notes that there are three current thrusts in distance education. The first is the excitement of the new technologies, i.e., radio, television, telephone, and computers as educational tools, over the last 30 years. The second is the rapid growth of knowledge which has meant that many adults have needed to return to some form of education, as much for work reasons as for interest. The third is the increasing cost of education; as the rights to education become more widespread, as birth rates increase and as the quality of that education already provided is improved, so the national bills for education are forecast to increase in a way governments will find difficult to meet.

Smith notes that the juxtaposition of these three thrusts has led many countries to select the distance education approach and counts a total of 304 institutions and 1,896,299 students as of 1986. He examines the needs that distance learning has satisfied and can satisfy in the economic, educational and social areas and looks at the educational process that is employed using distance learning, primarily from the British Open University experiences.

The six papers that follow respond to the points raised above from the Japanese experience. Whereas Japanese distance education also developed primarily on the basis of printed materials and correspondence, it succeeded in the employment of radio and television broadcasting as one of the primary media of education. It is also at the vanguard in the employment of various electronic communications technology as the media of educational communication. Dimensions of these approaches in Japanese distance education have been followed in the following papers with somewhat different emphasis as to the situations in which they were first published. They do have substantial duplications and insufficiencies, and yet I do hope they will be of some service to those who are interested in various approaches to distance education and those of Japan, in particular.

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